DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 436 486 SP 038 874

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TITLE	An International Comparison of Teacher Education. ERIC Digest.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education, Washington, DC.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	EDO-SP-1999-2
PUB DATE	1999-11-00
NOTE	4p.
CONTRACT	ED-99-CO-0007
AVAILABLE FROM	For full text: <http://www.ericsp.org>.
PUB TYPE	ERIC Publications (071) -- ERIC Digests in Full Text (073)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Elementary Secondary Education; *Faculty Development; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Inservice Teacher Education; *Preservice Teacher Education; Student Teaching; Teacher Improvement
IDENTIFIERS	ERIC Digests

ABSTRACT

As the world increasingly becomes a global society, education is viewed as an important avenue for national development. New teacher preparation and inservice teacher professional development is key to educational improvement. This Digest examines teacher education goals, candidate selection, content of teacher education programs, and student teaching or clinical preparation in selected countries. Many countries identify quality teachers as the goal of their teacher education programs. The social mission of teacher education is quite broad across countries. Countries vary in how they create standards for teacher education. Qualifications for entering teacher education programs vary considerably. Most countries have multiple entry points into teaching. Traditionally, teachers have been prepared in normal schools; however, many normal schools have evolved into multipurpose, 4-year colleges. Trends show teacher training being embedded in undergraduate degree programs, the requiring of undergraduate degrees for all teachers, and extending preparation requirements into graduate-level programs. Though there exists some variation in teacher education programs' curriculum content, most offer some combination of coursework in subject matter, teaching methods and materials, child growth and development, and other education courses. Student teaching or strong clinical practice is seen as essential in teacher preparation. The duration of such an experience varies widely and is influenced by teaching level and the nature of the teacher education program. (SM)

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DIGEST

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An International Comparison of Teacher Education

Velma L. Cobb

As the world increasingly becomes a global society, education is seen by many as an important avenue for national development. Economic growth, development and improved living standards are considered to be directly linked to the state of education. The preparation of new teachers and the ongoing professional development of those in the current teaching force is key to educational improvement (Cobb, Darling-Hammond, & Murangi, 1995). One example of this thrust is seen in the members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperative (APEC). APEC is comprised of eighteen economies that border the Pacific Ocean. Education, particularly teacher education, surfaced as one of the critical issues these economies chose to address[1]. This Digest looks at teacher education goals, candidate selection, the content of teacher education programs, and student teaching or clinical preparation in selected countries, including the United States.

National Goals for Teacher Education

Many countries identify "quality teachers" as the goal and focus of their teacher education programs. Quality teachers are described as having some combination of the following attributes: pedagogical knowledge, subject area content knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for effective teaching, strong understanding of human growth and child development, effective communication skills, strong sense of ethics, and capacity for renewal and ongoing learning (Cobb, Darling-Hammond, & Murangi, 1995).

The social mission of teacher education is quite broad across countries. Similar to the U.S., France, Germany, New Zealand, Hong Kong, and the People's Republic of China cite the importance of a well-trained teaching force as essential to preparing students to function competently within an increasingly technologically information-based society. In many countries, institutions set their own goals for teacher education programs, although in many cases these goals are set within a framework of national or state/province articulated goals. In Japan, France, Germany, and the People's Republic of China, goals for teacher education are set at the national level. In the U.S., each state sets standards for teacher education. Approximately 32 states have joined together to develop model standards for beginning teachers that are compatible with emerging standards for advanced certification, as currently being developed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Forty percent of U.S. teacher education programs, representing about 70 percent of teacher candidates, are accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), which uses a common set of standards to evaluate programs that map on to these model standards for beginning teachers. All other programs go through a state program approval process using state standards (National Commission on Teaching & America's Future [NCTAF], 1996).

Entry into Teacher Education Programs

Qualifications for entry into a teacher education program vary considerably, and most countries have multiple entry points into the field of teaching. Entry varies by type of preparing institution and by the school level for which candidates plan to teach-elementary (primary) or secondary. With the exception of the People's Republic of China, most countries now require the completion of secondary education for entry into preparation programs. In the People's Republic of China, preprimary and primary school teachers typically have completed junior high school plus a 3- to 4-year teacher training program (State Education Commission, 1995).

Examinations are common to determine candidates' readiness and capacity for teacher education programs. In Germany, candidates must take both oral and written exams (Waldrop, 1991). In the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, and the People's Republic of China, all secondary graduates must take a national exam. In countries where there are no national exams, teacher preparation institutions set their own criteria for admission, such as in France, New Zealand, Canada, and Japan. In the U.S., an increasing number of states require some form of testing before entry into a teacher education program. In addition, 15 states and over 70 percent of colleges have set minimum grade-point averages for entry into teacher education (Darling-Hammond & Cobb, 1995).

While candidates' academic achievement is most often assessed through grades and test scores, some countries also assess language and communication skills, conduct interviews, and consider aptitude for leading cocurricular activities. In some countries student intake in teacher education is determined jointly by government bodies and the teacher education program. The total number of candidates admitted is typically based on the supply and demand of teachers and/or the funding available for candidates (NCTAF, 1996). Such is the case in Germany, France, and Japan. Usually, the government underwrites some or all of the costs of education for candidates. For example, in France candidates are given government stipends and receive a salary in their final year of studies, which serves as their residency under the supervision of an experienced teacher (Holyoake, 1993).

In the U.S., Canada, and Japan, there are no set processes in place to determine the number of students admitted into teacher education. Program size typically depends on the number of candidates meeting entry requirements and the admission policies of the institution. In some Canadian provinces, intake quotas are fixed for specific content areas. In both the U.S. and Canada, the cost of teacher education is borne by the candidate in the form of tuition payments (Cobb, Darling-Hammond, & Murangi, 1995).

Programs

Traditionally, teachers have been prepared in normal schools; however, many normal schools have evolved into multipurpose 4-year colleges. Trends show teacher training being embedded in undergraduate degree programs, the requiring of undergraduate degrees for all teachers, and extending preparation requirements into graduate-level programs.

Among APEC members, teacher education generally falls into three categories (Cobb, Darling-Hammond, & Murangi, 1995):

- Certificate or diploma programs housed in normal colleges, normal schools, and colleges of education established solely for the purpose of training teachers. These programs are usually for elementary teachers and emphasize pedagogical preparation more than subject area preparation. In most

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cases these are 2- to 4-year programs.

- Bachelor's degree programs housed at general, multipurpose universities. These programs tend to entail greater subject matter preparation and relatively less pedagogical preparation. These are generally 3- or 4-year programs, with the teacher preparation portion lasting one to two years.
- Master's degree and/or 5th-year programs. These programs are open to candidates who have completed a bachelor's degree and lead to a master's degree or postgraduate diploma in education. The duration of these programs ranges from one to two years.

In the U.S., Canada, and Japan, teachers at all levels are prepared the same. Candidates are typically prepared through bachelor's degree programs or 5th-year programs that can lead to a master's degree. Australia, New Zealand, and Hong Kong have started in the last decade to prepare elementary teachers in programs that lead to a bachelor's degree.

Though there exist some variations in curriculum content of teacher education programs, most offer some combination of coursework in subject matter, teaching methods and materials, child growth and development, and other education courses such as educational psychology, history and philosophy of education, and practical teaching experience. The extent of education coursework varies by grade level to be taught (Cobb, Darling-Hammond, & Murangi, 1996).

In some countries, primary teachers often do not concentrate in a specific subject area but rather train as generalists to teach across content areas. However, in the U.S. many states are beginning to require elementary education candidates to major in a liberal arts discipline while taking the requisite teacher education courses, rather than majoring in education, as was the case previously. In Alberta, Canada, and Chinese Taipei, primary education students must concentrate in a specific subject area in addition to a generalist focus. And in Hong Kong and Germany, students must concentrate in two subject areas. At the secondary level, candidates typically major in the subject area they will teach (NCTAF, 1996).

The U.S., Australia, Singapore, Japan, New Zealand, Canada, and Hong Kong allow students already having a bachelor's degree to enter teaching. These programs are usually one to two years in length and students receive postgraduate diplomas in teaching and/or a master's degree.

Student Teaching and Clinical Practice

Student teaching or a strong clinical practice component is seen as an essential element to teacher preparation. The duration of such an experience varies widely and appears to be influenced by teaching level and sometimes the nature of the teacher education program. Practice teaching experiences for primary teachers range from several 4-week sessions in New Zealand to a full-year internship in Germany, France, Luxembourg, Belgium, and Chinese Taipei (NCTAF, 1996). Most often, practice teaching occurs following coursework near the end of the teacher education program; however, increasingly it is being spread throughout the entire teacher education program. Candidates are asked to observe classrooms, tutor young people, and to serve as teacher aides prior to actual practice teaching.

Teachers preparing in Germany face two full years of internship that include seminar and classroom experiences. College- and school-based faculties observe and evaluate at least 25 lessons. At the end of this period candidates go through a variety of portfolio and paper assessments prior to teaching (Waldrop, 1991).

In the U.S., student teaching ranges from eight weeks to two full semesters with most programs averaging 12-15 weeks. Newer graduate-level programs have begun requiring year-long intensive practice teaching or internship experiences that are school-based, often in professional development schools.

In New Zealand and Australia, the cooperating teacher, associate teacher, or tutoring teacher is responsible for mentoring and evaluating student teachers. In Germany, the U.S., Canada, and Singapore both school- and college/university-based faculty assess students. The trend towards establishing specific school and college/university partnerships that create linkages between teacher education coursework and clinical practice is gaining.

Summary

An educated populace is a vital resource for national growth in a global economy, and teacher education is emerging as an essential element to improving education. Increasing academic requirements for higher levels of learning necessitate better-qualified teachers. In the last decade, teacher education has increasingly become part of degree-granting colleges or universities; the duration of training has increased; and the importance of clinical practice through lengthy student teaching experiences and/or internships has gained prominence.

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[1] Participating APEC members include: Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, and the United States. All information was self-reported following a jointly developed, common research framework.

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This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvment, under contract number ED-99-CO-0007. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views of or policies of the U. S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U. S. Government.